

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLB #0655/01 1322256
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 112256Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1808
INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 4343
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3792
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 3709
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA PRIORITY 3131
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 3443
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 1338
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 0114

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 000655

SIPDIS

STATE FOR DS/CC; DS/DSS/ITA; DS/IP/NEA; NEA/EX
POSTS FOR RSO; S/ES

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/11/2018

TAGS: [CASC](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [LE](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: BEIRUT EAC MEETING MAY 11, 2008 (1600 EST)

REF: BEIRUT 00651

Classified By: CDA Michele J. Sison a.i. for reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶11. (C) At 2300 local time (1600 EST) on May 11, 2008, CDA Sison convened a meeting of the Emergency Action Committee to brief on her leadership discussions throughout the day and dispel some of the day's rumors. She met with the Lebanese Armed Forces Commander twice, the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister, the Justice Minister, the Social Affairs Minister, the Telecommunications Minister, and Samir Geagea in separate meetings throughout the day. She also spoke by telephone with Majority leader Saad Hariri, former President Amine Gemayel, and Walid Jumblatt. (More detailed readouts are being provided septel.) All of her interlocutors were extremely concerned about the current security situation and few believed that the airport access road would be cleared in the immediate future. End Summary

Security Updates

¶12. (C) Despite rumors in the media, there is no evidence at this time that the Grand Serail, which houses PM Sinora's offices, has been attacked by the opposition. At this time, we also have no reports the Hariri or Jumblatt residences are under attack. We will continue to monitor this closely.

¶13. (C) There is continued denial of access to the Beirut International Airport (BIA). Following the spread of the rumors mentioned above, personal moves were cancelled at 2000 local time on May 11. The EAC upheld a decision to cancel all non-mission critical TDY visits through May 16. The Charge said that there had been few cars on the city streets earlier in the day although traffic seemed to be increasing in the evening hours.

¶14. (C) Armed clashes between pro-March 14 Druze fighters and the Hezbollah led opposition seem to be on-going at this time, despite earlier media reports that a cease-fire had been declared. A number of American citizens who contacted Embassy's American Citizen Services (ACS) call center were calling from that area and gunfire could be heard in the background.

¶15. (C) The Charge also spoke with a pro-March 14 Tripoli MP Mosbah Ahdab, who said that the situation in Tripoli remains extremely tense.

Consular Issues

¶16. (SBU) There are currently 65 official Americans under COM authority in Beirut and 13 members of a SOCCENT 5th Special Forces Group JCET team from Fort Campbell due to depart on May 20. F-77 figures from March 2008 estimate there are 92,232 potential evacuees in Beirut: 59,372 Americans and 32,860 non - U.S. citizens.

¶17. (C) Per reftel, the Consular section has suspended non-emergency non-immigrant visa operations and the decision was announced locally via press releases and was posted on the Embassy website. We will still service humanitarian travel and official requests on a case-by-case basis.

¶18. (C) There has been an increase in the number of phone calls from American citizens looking for information on the current security situation and asking about options for departure for Lebanon. There were a total of 41 calls on May 11, but the callers were described as calm and cooperative. Our ACS call center, staffed by American employees, seems to be a useful tool to relay a consistent message to concerned AmCits.

¶19. (C) We have revised the language for our Travel Advisory and have sent to Washington for clearance.

¶10. (C) Finally, the EAC updated certain sections of the Emergency Action Plan to ensure that all of the information is current.

Current Mission Capabilities

¶11. (C) Currently, the Embassy is able to resupply from the local economy and our Awkar location is removed from the intense fighting in the downtown areas. Local staff tell us that the stores seem to have more supplies on their shelves today.

¶12. (C) At this time, post is not requesting significant additional personnel or equipment.
SISON